

Wittman Field Hosts Civil Air Patrol National Flight Academy

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Monday, 20 June 2011



Oshkosh, Wis. - June 20, 2011. Twenty eager cadets, eight flight instructors, 10 days, and a ramp full of Cessna 172 aircraft. Put them together and you have a whole lot of flying going on.

Last week, the National Powered Flight Academy (NFA) was keeping the air traffic controllers at Wittman Field in Oshkosh very busy.

The National Flight Academy is one of many special activities offered across the country for Civil Air Patrol cadets during the summer. This year marked the 17th anniversary of the flight academy in Oshkosh. Cadets, ages 16 to 20, received up to 10 hours of dual instruction in CAP aircraft. They also received at least two hours of ground instruction each day.

Although the goal of the activity is simply to learn as much as possible in the time allowed, 15 cadets became proficient enough to solo during the activity. Solo flight entailed one take off and landing at an airport without the instructor aboard. Cadets that do a "pre-solo" accomplish a take off and landing without any assistance from their on-board flight instructor. Flight instruction also counts towards the training needed to obtain an FAA private pilot certificate.

For Captain John Thompson, one of the instructors who taught at NFA for the past six years, it was a special honor to be the first flight instructor that some of the cadets have had.

"Whatever they go on to do in aviation, their first logbook entries have my name on them." He said.

Teaching at the flight academy was something Captain Robin Kim has always wanted

to do. Kim, a first-time flight instructor from Florida, has great memories of the flight encampment he had as a cadet in New Jersey.

"I received so much from Civil Air Patrol as a cadet," he said. "This is a way to give back to the next generation of cadets."

The activity more than met his expectations. The reward for instructors, he added, was seeing "the transformation that happens in the students, the higher level learning that takes place."



The flight academy concluded Sunday, June 19, with a banquet at the EAA Museum. Eighteen cadets were pinned with either solo or pre-solo wings. Many parents and friends were in attendance to celebrate the cadets' accomplishments.

Five of this year's cadets were from Wisconsin. Their "stick partners" were cadets from eight other states: Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, Florida, Utah, New Mexico, and California.

The cadets from the Wisconsin Wing included Cadet First Lieutenant Charles Holden (WI-184), Cadet Senior Master Sergeant Jacob Papcke (WI-088), Cadet Master Sergeant Jacob Crnkovich (WI-057), Cadet Master Sergeant Jacob Reuter (WI-055), and Cadet Master Sergeant Cody Alexander (WI-008).

The following cadets also took part: Cadet Captain Parry Thomas (FL-444), Cadet First Lt. Derek McGuckin ((OH-278), Cadet 1st Lt. Matthias Pratt (OH-209), Cadet Second Lt. Joel Cortwright (MI-073), Cadet 2nd LT. Ashley Thornton (MI-238), Cadet 2nd Lt. Thomas Pendergrass (CA-384), Cadet 2nd Lt. Mahlon Kruse (MO-140), Cadet 2nd Lt. Gianni Covacci (UT-027), Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Trent Grothaus (OH-078), Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Raymund Martinez (C-046), Cadet Master Sgt. Dustin Graham (KY-050), Cadet Master Sgt. Jacob Brandon (MI-257), Cadet Staff Sgt. Andres-Bader-Elenes (NM-033), Cadet Airman First Class Jacob Thompson (MO-140), and Cadet Senior

Airman Kurtis Reid (OH-278).

Instructors at this year's academy were: Colonel Larry Stys (NHQ-999, chief flight instructor), Capt. Greg Patchel (WI-064), Capt. Fred Petersen (WI-037), Capt. Jimmy Szajkovics (WI-086), Capt. John Thompson (WI-183), Capt. Tom Owens (GA-001), Capt. Jason Fox (FL-049), and Capt. Robin Kim (FL-049).

It took much more than flight instructors to keep the flight academy running. Activity Director Lieutenant Colonel Marcia Cunningham started planning the activity last October. Her experiences in flight encampments and academies goes back 31 years, and she has been activity director or staff for 24 of those years.

This year she had Lt. Colonel Denese Helgeland as her deputy director. Staff also included Lt. Col. Bob Bowen (flight operations), Lt. Col. Tom Fedyzkowski (transportation), Lt. Col. Vern Syring (safety), Major Donna Daniels (administraton), Capt. Shaun Allen (communications), and Capt. Robert Christiansen (flight line), and 1st Lt. Terese Barta (ground school instruction/public affairs).

The academy has been a national activity since 1995.

(Photos above: Capt. Greg Patchel conducts a pre-flight with cadets Jacob Brandon, Mahlon Kruses, and Raymund Martinez; Col. Larry Stys pins solo wings on Cadet Jacob Crnkovich as Cadet Kurtis Reid looks on.)